

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Previously presented) A computer-implemented method for use by a merchant in a virtual retail store in communicating a message to a customer who has selected multiple items for purchase, the method comprising:
 - establishing an online shopping session with the customer;
 - maintaining a list of the items that the customer has selected for purchase during the online shopping session;
 - providing information about the items in the list to an analytical program;
 - receiving from the analytical program information identifying at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy;
 - preparing a message that includes information about the alternative item; and
 - before the online shopping session has ended, delivering the message to the customer.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
 - obtaining data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the merchant; and
 - providing this data to the analytical program for use in identifying at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, where obtaining data about previous purchases includes obtaining data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.
4. (Withdrawn)
5. (Withdrawn)
6. (Withdrawn)
7. (Withdrawn)
8. (Withdrawn)

9. (Previously presented) Computer program code, stored on a tangible storage medium, for use by a merchant in a virtual retail store in communicating a message to a customer who has selected multiple items for purchase, the program comprising executable instructions that, when executed by a computer, cause the computer to:

 during an online shopping session of the customer, maintain a list of the items that the customer has selected for purchase during the online shopping session;

 analyze the list to identify at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy;

 prepare a message that includes information about the alternative item; and

 before the online shopping session has ended, cause delivery of the message to the customer.

10. (Previously presented) The computer program code of claim 9, where the code also causes the computer to:

 obtain data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the merchant; and

 provide this data for use in identifying at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy.

11. (Previously presented) The computer program code of claim 10, where, in obtaining data about previous purchases, the computer obtains data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.

12. (Withdrawn)

13. (Withdrawn)

14. (Withdrawn)

15. (Withdrawn)

16. (Withdrawn)

17. (Previously presented) A computer system for use by a merchant in a virtual retail store in communicating a message to a customer who has selected multiple items for purchase, the system comprising:

- at least one processor;
- a network interface component configured to allow the computer to exchange information with the customer over a computer network; and
- one or more data storage units configured to store one or more application programs and one or more analytical programs, where the application and analytical programs comprise executable instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the computer to:

- during an online shopping session of the customer, maintain a list of the items that the customer has selected for purchase during the online shopping session;
- analyze the list to identify at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy;
- prepare a message that includes information about the alternative item; and
- before the online shopping session has ended, cause delivery of the message to the customer.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17, further comprising a database-management system configured to:

- store data about previous purchases made by one or more customers of the merchant; and
- when instructed to do so, retrieve this data for use in identifying at least one alternative item that the customer might want to buy.

19. (Original) The system of claim 18, where the database-management system, in storing data about previous purchases, is configured to store data about one or more previous purchases made by the customer to whom the message is being delivered.

20. (Withdrawn)

21. (Withdrawn)

22. (Withdrawn)